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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
OF THE ROUTE LOCATION BETWEEN LANGEBAAN AND
SALDANHA

Prepared for

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by

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INTRODUCTION

This reports contains the findings of an initial archaeological impact assessment of the proposed route location between Langebaan and Saldanha.

As part of the initial impact assessment the Agency for Cultural Resource Management has been asked to determine the archaeological significance of the area. Specifically the archaeological input includes:

1. A brief description of the archaeology of the area.
2. If any archaeological sites would be affected within the proposed corridors, what would be the significance of the impact.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGEBAAN AND SALDANHA

South Africa is endowed with a long and rich archaeological heritage. The remains of much of this heritage is concentrated along the coastline. The coastal region between Langebaan and Saldanha is known to be particularly rich in archaeological and palaeontological sites. This region has been subjected to archaeological (both professional and amateur) investigations since the early 1930s. A recent data collection exercise by the consultant for the Department of Environmental Affairs revealed that a minimum of 399 archaeological sites are known to occur in the region, a number of them being of considerable international significance. High concentrations of sites are known to occur along the coast between Lynch Point and Leentjiesklip 1, the coastal region west of the proposed route location C, and sites are known from the farm Oliphantstokop through which the present route C passes.

The area with its unique granite geology and shoreline formations was favoured by prehistoric people. Prior to 1800 years ago the south western Cape was inhabited by hunter-gatherers (Bushmen) people whose economy was based upon the exploitation of wild animals, indigenous plant foods as well as marine animals. This changed with the arrival of Khoi herding groups who introduced domestic animals (cattle and sheep) into the Cape which resulted in a new economic order. The region (although rich in sites of early hunter-gatherers subsequently became a centre of the prehistoric herding economy - the local shales and granites providing vital nutrients for domestic stock that are not available on the Cape Peninsula or the sandstone mountains of the Cape Fold Belt. To this day unresolved questions about the origins, ecology and lifestyle of early pastoralists have attracted the interest of historians, archaeologists and anthropologists alike.

INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

All proposed site routes where access was available were assessed. The initial impact assessment involved driving along the proposed routes and searching for sites or the remains of sites for 10 minutes after every 2.5 kilometers.

RESULTS OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. Routes A and B: Routes A and B pass through a portion of the West Coast National Park. This route was not visited. Access to the area is only possible with 4-wheel drive vehicle. According to National Park Board (NPB) officials the land through which the proposed route passes has recently been acquired. Known as Massenbergr Farm, the area was cultivated for many years but is now mainly covered by trees and bush. No sites are known to exist in the area, but archaeological visibility would be obscured by the significant ground cover.

Significance of impact: *Medium*

2. Route C1: The southernmost section of proposed route C1 will pass through privately owned farm land. This section of route C1 was not visited as access is only possible with 4-wheel drive vehicle. The land is vegetated and partially cultivated and it not clear what the significance of the impact would be without visiting the site. Upgrading of the existing route C1 road is not likely to impact on archaeological sites.

Significance of impact: *Medium-Low*

3. Route C2: Very little archaeological impact likely.

Significance of impact: *Low*

4. Routes D and G: Very little archaeological impact likely.

Significance of impact: *Low*

5. Routes E/F and J: Very little archaeological impact likely.

Significance of impact: *Low*

5. Route M: Very little archaeological impact likely.
Significance of impact: *Low*

EFFECT OF ROUTE LOCATION ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

No significant impact on archaeological sites will be affected by the proposed route locations between Saldanha and Langebaan. The records of the Archaeology Departments of the South African Museum, Cape Town and the University of Cape Town, show no sites that will be impacted by the proposed route locations. Routes A and B, and the southernmost section of proposed route C, however, were not visited by the consultant and the assessment is based on information made available by NPB officials (Kevin Moore and Sarel Yssel, National Parks Board, Langebaan, pers. comm.). Archaeological visibility in the area is obscured by vegetation and sites may be located in foot searches.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is not likely to be significant impact on above ground archaeological remains along the proposed route locations between Langebaan and Saldanha. Proposed routes A and B, and the southernmost section of route C, however, may contain sites of some significance.

1. A concern is that earthmoving could produce finds which lie fossilised in the underlying calcrete (The Langebaan/Saldanha region is well known for extensive fossil sites such as Langebaanweg and Hoedjiespunt which are associated with calcrete beds). Proposed routes A and B may yield such sites.
2. Archaeological visibility in the proposed route locations is low. Sites and burials and human skeletal remains which are protected may be unearthed during earthmoving operations, particularly in route location A and B.
3. Any decision taken on proposed routes should be subjected to a detailed archaeological impact assessment.
4. The location of borrow pits and construction of access roads may impact on sites. The location of these sites should also be subject to a detailed archaeological impact assessment.

In terms of the archaeology of the proposed route locations, the archaeological significance of the area is considered to be medium to low.